Engl.

THE CEA CRITIC

Vol. No. XXI—No. 5—Published at Springfield, Mass. Editorial Office, University, Amherst, Mass. May, 1959

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DURHAM, N. C.

WHAT IS COLLEGE FOR?

On April 17 and 18, 1959, a Humanities Center Conference held on the campus of Miami University, Oxford, Ohio as part of its 150th anniversary celebration, brought together nearly two hundred teachers, administrators, and businessmen interested in education. An unusual feature of this conference was the presence of sixteen honor students from various campuses across the country who took an eager part in all the deliberations.

After hearing a representative of the UAW discuss the attitude of labor toward American higher education at a Phi Beta Kappa banquet on the evening before the conference proper began, the conferees listened to August Heckscher of the Twentieth Century Fund and to Mark Van Doren of Columbia University address a morning session.

Mr. Heckscher described the college as "among the most original of American institutions," a place, a way of life, not merely a course of study. He urged that we do everything in our power to preserve its spirit.

The college is a place apart from life; it must be cleansed, but not effete. Mr. Heckscher deplored the tendency of make the college conform to the ethic of suburbia; he deplored the destruction of privacy on the campus, the emphasis on busyness, the loss of a sense of public responsibility. Students are now preoccupied by art, emotion, subjectivity, and the modern seminar has the atmosphere of a "kaffee klatsch." The ethic of suburbia foresakes the open forum, he said. He urged that we gear ourselves to the needs of our society. While college is not "something to beat the Russians with," we must nevertheless forego some of the old leisureliness. We must surrender the right to be inferior to our best selves; we must abandon the delights of dilettantism. In the years ahead, he predicted, the mission of the American college will be subtly transformed. A new season of intellectual growth is at hand.

Mark Van Doren presented an eloquent plea for the preservation of basic values in higher education which filled the corridors afterwards with words of praise for his simply expressed but telling wisdom. Education will never save the world, he said, for saving the world has never been

(Please turn to p. 3)

GOOD OLD ENGLISH

There is perhaps a certain bliss in either being ignorant of or ignoring language infidelities in the radio pronunciation and diction of our day, as well as in our current books, magazines, and newspapers. If we could take these in stride, we might indeed lead more contented lives. Feeling no wounds we could jest at the idea of scars.

The present remarks are addressed, not to the undisciplined or gaily indifferent in affairs of language, but instead to those reasonably prepared individuals who are not listening attentively to the deviations from normality now pressing in upon once protected preserves. Perhaps some one or two may be induced to keep ears and minds alert, and to resolve highly to be on guard against the dangers from infection.

My personal feelings are badly shaken up (in fact are all shook up) by "This medicine has been **clinicly** tested and **medicly** approved," by **electricly, mently, physicly,** and all their unending train. The insidious cause for such slurring or swallowing lies of course in the fact that English, wonderful language though it is, replete with beauties that cannot all die (however diligently multitudes of its users work to that end) is what we are forced to call a lazy language. While French, German, Spanish, and other tongues have built-in physical preventions of change in articulation and pronunciation, English, in contrast, exacts almost no muscular effort, or even mouth-opening, that might maintain a desired **status quo.**

Retaining what satisfaction we can, in face of the disease that has struck down words like the above, we may note that the American ear, somewhat surprisingly, still holds the line against British **militry, territry, Labratry.** But **clinicly** is an entering wedge that could one day pry loose our defenses at such points.

In **o-ficial, o-casion, e-fective, e-fusive** the ease and comfort gained by the lopping off of a sound are trifling, but apparently all that is needed to "swing the deal."

Then there are those roughly handled single consonants between vowels that in other languages vigorously start a new syllable while in English they supinely let themselves be incorporated into the preceding one—and all because of the same inglorious love of ease. Witness **aut-o, Nate-o, Plate-o, gott-a** (for **got to**). The phenomenon in **aut-o** is rendered doubly disagreeable when in addition the **au** loses its identity, and **aut-o** becomes **ott-o.** It is peculiarly painful (to this writer) that so very many make no distinction in sound between **don** and **dawn, offal** and **awful, naughty** and **knotty.** They seem to think it somehow indelicate to pronounce **on** otherwise than as an assonance with **what.** Try "on and on and on" on this sound

(Please turn to p. 6)

THE MATHEMATICS OF POE'S POETRY

A great artist must also be a deep scholar. He must know perfectly the range, capacity, and maneuverability of his medium. He must know the subject matter about which he composes his work. And above all else he must have the constructive power of imagination whereby the subject matter is subordinated to the emotion which it arouses. Art has no responsibility to portray the facts of life; its duty and its aim must be to arouse the feeling of the audience.

Because we live in an age of photography, of factual, literal, journalistic reproduction of experience, our view of art is often distorted. Art is not fidelity to outward nature or human experience. By representation through an altered, selected, focused heightening of data, art seeks to secure a single compulsive emotional effect.

By these criteria Edgar Allan Poe was supreme among literary artists in his generation. He not only had the capacity to write great short stories and poems but he also phrased the critical ideas by which works of verbal art could be created and tested.

In 1843, the year of Noah Webster's death, Poe spoke of himself as one who had "spent more time in analyzing the construction of our language than any living grammarian, critic, or essayist." As a man of learning he perfected his knowledge of his artistic medium, language. His insights anticipated much that we now call structural linguistics. Just as he knew more about the acoustics and mathematics of music than most musicians, so he knew more about the acoustics and mathematics of language than any other person for a century. Even today few persons comprehend his insistence that "syllables are variable exponents of various phases of thought," for linguistics scholars are slow to learn that the mathematical theory of functionality explains the operations of language.

Because there is no one way of saying anything, the poet is the person who is delegated to discover the best way or ways. To do so he must know the structure of his native language and its operations, its system of sounds and intonation patterns, and its vocabulary. In addition, he must know the structural patterns of logic and rhetoric as they relate to the art form of poetry.

Only Shakepeare stands unmistakably the equal of Poe in these matters. Dryden almost equals Poe, but Dryden tended to disparage the English language as a poetic medium in contrast with Greek and Latin. Dryden was petulant whenever he thought of the necessity to use, as we all must, the three hundred recurring structure words: **a, an, the, at, can, when,** etc. Shakespeare and Poe consistently manipulated their artistic effects to subordinate these words that constitute the most important

(Please turn to p. 5)

THE CEA CRITIC

Official Organ of the College English Assoc. Inc. Send form 3579 notices to Editor, Box 472, Amherst, Mass.
Editor: Maxwell H. Goldberg
Mgr. Editor: Lee E. Holt, Am. International Col.
Published Monthly, September through May

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Associate Member, American Council on Education
(Address contributions and correspondence to the Managing Editor, c/o College English Association, South College, Univ. of Mass., Amherst, Mass.)
Published at 38 Hampden St., Springfield, Mass.
Annual Subcription $2.50 for CEA members only.
Second-Class Postage Paid at Springfield, Mass.

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NEW FUNCTION FOR CRITIC

Another function for **The CEA Critic!** It can serve as a patent office or clearing house for new figures of speech or other brilliant nuances of our language. Let it not be said that the crass commercialism of the **Reader's Dogest** can filter off the cream of linguistic creativeness.

Obviously I have a personal interest. I have an image. I believe it may be therapeutic in these critical days leading to the final grading period of the scholastic year.

Education sems to me similar to drawing water from the hot water faucet. The teacher must stand with alert finger, testing the temperature. At first comes only the stagnent, cool water that remains in the pipes from previous experience. Then, usually about the time you become panicky, wondering if the furnace is out, comes the warming sign and then the scalding onrush of 180 degrees answering your call.

As an added bonus, I'll even record here for doctoral candidates of the future who may be investigating my imagery some details of the genesis of the image. As appears obvious, it came to me while I was shaving. But not so obviously, it came the morning after I read the latest issue of the Critic and detected the signs of spring fever creeping up on the profession. My unconscious concern for the English teacher was the wellspring.

From now on I expect to see users of this simile cite this issue of **The CEA Critic.** Readers of the weekly picture supplement PARADE will have become accustomed to seing movie stars quoted with the parenthetical acknowledgement (as quoted by Lyons). To avoid the implication that Lyons made up the quotation, I hope PARADE changes the words some time. For our readers I suggest that we use the words appropriate to our circumstances.

To wit: Education is, as John Jacques registered in **The CEA Critic** (May, 1959), like drawing water from the hot water faucet.

I do not expect any reward for suggesting this use of **the Critic.** I am satisfied to be Patent #1.

John F. Jaques
University of Maine in Portland

The English Department of Seton Hall University is sponsoring a Francis Thompson Centenary celebration to be held on Saturday, October 31, 1959, on the campus in South Orange, N. J. Planned are an exhibition of Thompsoniana and two paper-reading sessions. Persons wishing to submit papers should send them to Professor Paul M. Ochojski, Thompson Centenary Committee, Seton Hall University, South Orange, N. J., before September 15, 1959.

The Michigan CEA has cooperated in the publication of a booklet "Preparation and Pupil Load" by V. E. Leichty of Michigan State University, issued by the Michigan Council of Teachers of English. Copies can be obtained for fifteen cents from A. K. Stevens, Editor, Haven Hall, Ann Arbor.

For the study, records of teacher training and teaching loads were obtained from one fourth of the English teachers in public schools, Catholic parochial schools, Protestant parochial schools, private schools, and schools divided according to size and location.

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(Continued from p. 1)

its aim. The aim of education is to make people happy, and happiness is a very serious thing. Happiness depends on being free to use one's mind; the free use of the mind is the greatest pleasure man can know. When the student discovers this, the world then becomes intelligible to him.

Mark Van Doren called for a renewed faith in the intellect, an end to the idea that only the expert can think. An educated person is a person who knows that there are no areas which he cannot think about, he said, and he is also a man who knows that he can change his mind when he is wrong. If we really believed this, the speaker said, then we could beat the Russians. The student should not be asked to educate himself for the sake of society, as though he himself were not a vital part of that society.

The teacher must have a child-like faith that all students are wonderful. This is the meaning of democracy. Democracy, like education, is not supposed to accomplish anything; it is a value in and for itself. It is disastrous to believe that either education or democracy should reshape itself for a particular end.

If we want to have great men again, Mark Van Doren contended, then we must drop the notion that the world is unintelligible. It is still possible, even in our time, for one man to know everything. We moderns suffer from a lack of faith in our minds. The danger for us today is that science is not important enough for us and that too many of us are willing to know nothing about the world. In conclusion, poet Van Doren blamed the poets of our day for our dangerous illiteracy. Contemporary poets know nothing, he maintained, and the study of literature has become specialized to a sickening degree.

The discussion session which this reporter attended focused its attention on steps being taken at several universities to make undergraduate life more interesting and fruitful, to increase interest in books, ideas, music, and free discussions. Professors should see more of students outside the classroom and the anti-intellectualism which spreads to the campus from the outer world should be combated. Two students in the group spoke up in opposition to the over-emphasis upon extracurricular activities on the American campus, and Dewey Barich, president of the Detroit Institute of Technology, underlined the importance of the student's realizing that in the last analysis he must "slug it out by himself." He and Father Wirtenberger of Xavier University called for more opportunity for the student to work alone and to meditate on what he is learning.

Laughter and echoes of eager discussion which could be heard through the walls of the other discussion rooms proved that each of the six discussion groups was having a lively time.

At the luncheon David Shepard of Standard Oil of New Jersey pointed out that modern life puts a premium on versatility. We need men of balanced background, understanding, ability, and integrity, he said. College cannot be expected to create such men unaided, but it can help.

In the afternoon, so that the discussion of what a college is for would not be carried on over the heads of the undergraduates, four students addressed the conference. Ludwig Bruch, Rhodes Scholar-elect from the University of Wisconsin, said that specialization on the campus is so great that here already students begin to misunderstand and distrust each other. More effort must be exerted to bring them together intellectually as well as in their social lives. He asked also for a greater understanding of the unruliness of youth. College is "the student's last chance to be Mickey Mouse before he becomes a solemn ass."

Chris Callsen of Miami University requested the college teacher to put more real content into his courses, to do less spoonfeeding, to rely less on textbooks, and to seek ways of reducing the frightful number of man-hours of wasted time in college classes. He urged that the multiplicity of courses required of the undergraduate be narrowed and that the work be made concentrated and advanced. He called for more teachers who are themselves devoted to the subjects they teach, and for more humility in the teacher. Students are too often treated like children; there is not enough genuine exchange of serious ideas.

W. Hartley Henry, Rhodes Scholar-elect of Kenyon College, felt that too many undergraduates specialize unnecessarily, and yet at the same time fail to realize the professional nature of the graduate work for which they are preparing. They do not come to understand the meaning of liberal arts, but interpret it mechanically in stock phrases. We must continue to seek for the meaning of a liberal education, he said, for that is the only way such an education can be successful.

Allan R. Millet of DePauw University maintained that there is no substitute in education for personal contact with the teacher. The teacher must find ways to shake students out of their indifference. The world does not owe the student an education. He must be taught to get it on his own.

In a lively discussion which followed it was pointed out that there is a great deal of ferment among students at present and definite changes are being called for. A student from Harvard contended, however, that the American college student of the present shows insufficient initiative and revolutionary ardor. There should be more effective education both before and after college than there is now, he said.

After a reception and dinner as guests of the General Motors Corporation, the conference listened to an address by John Furbay calling for greater understanding of other societies and peoples and for greater racial tolerance. Unless American education can create more compassion and understanding among our people, we will lose out in our race against the forces of destruction.

The Saturday morning session was devoted to an intriguing look into the future by Robert Hutchins of the Fund for the Republic and Max Lerner of Brandeis University. In Utopian vein, Hutchins read an imaginary report to the board of Lockesley Hall for the year 1988. Higher education at that time will be completed when students reach 18, for they will have had six years of elementary, three years of high school,

(Please turn to p. 4)

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WHAT IS COLLEGE FOR?
(Continued from p. 3)

and three years of college education. The college will be run by its faculty, none of whom will have degrees, and all of whom will be equipped to teach all subjects. There will be no departments nor department chairmen (the greatest enemies of progress), no faculty rank, and no commencement or degrees for the students.

Faculty salaries will be equal to salaries of junior executives of large corporations. Studies will be limited to theology, cosmology, and law, and teachers will learn to teach by teaching. Graduates will be required to attend discussion groups for adults throughout life. Adjustment to the group "will be a matter of supreme indifference" to the college. Examinations will be taken at any time, and the three years' study time will be merely an average figure. Early in the twentieth century education was not free, his report said, for it flattered the society which supported it and did not tell the truth.

Max Lerner described our present state as a race between intelligence and chaos. Our educational system must turn out young people "who can stretch themselves to the greatest possibility" he said. We have spent too much time in this country trying to hold on to what we have and have lost sight of the need for transcending ourselves. In the past, we were a mass society and our education was designed for a mass society; we are now becoming a spearhead society, and the college of the future must develop spearhead groups. The key word to explain America, Max Lerner said, is "access"; equal educational opportunity, but an education which will get to the carriers of progress. At present, our colleges do not set the level of expectation high enough. They do not require a command of basic educational skills.

Max Lerner said we should not turn backward to traditionally accepted subjects but should go forward to new and valuable interrelations. We have little tragic understanding in our American culture. We need to push into the frontiers of anthropology, psychology, and sociology. He decried the present state of graduate study which makes martinets of men. Teachers should not be required to take graduate work. We have the acquisitiveness of a sick society and must find more meaningful goals, must take "a journey into the interior" and 'confront the Medusa head within ourselves."

In the discussion which followed Hutchins said that the domination of the university by departments and by research men for whom the university seems to have been created makes real liberal education virtually impossible and Max Lerner agreed. Max Lerner said that in addition to doing away with the orientation of education toward research he would also do away with the orientation toward the classroom. For this he would substitute orientation toward books and student discussion.

At the concluding session of the conference Herman Allen of **Newsweek** discussed "The Conference and Its Implications" and John Ciardi, national president of CEA, gave an epilogue in which he pointed out that the conference had raised many "unanswerable questions" which must be asked more and more searchingly in the years to come.

Co-ordinators of the conference for the Humanities Center were Maxwell H. Goldberg, John Ball, and Donald J. Lloyd. Many leaders of the CEA were present. Francis Horn, president of the University of Rhode Island, was co-chairman with Dewey F. Barich, president of the Detroit Institute of Technology. John Hicks of Stetson was co-ordinator of the discussion session.

L. E. H.

The 1959 annual laboratory-demonstration workshop will be held at the Betts Reading Clinic, Haverford, Pa., July 20 to 31. The workshop will be conducted by Dr. Emmett A. Betts and Miss Carolyn M. Welch. For registration information write to Registrar, The Betts Reading Clinic, Haverford, Penna.

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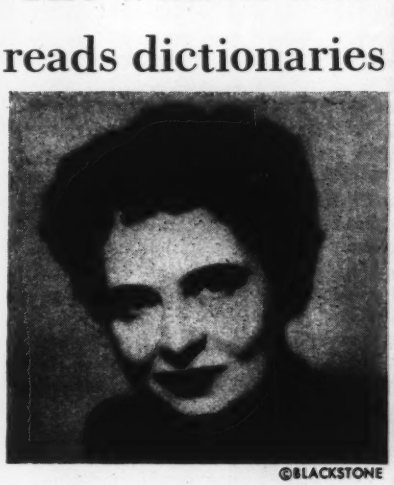
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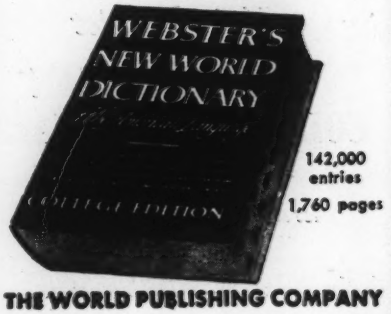

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The Mathematics of Poe's Poetry

(Continued from p. 1)

machinery of the language.

One test of poetry is the unobtrusive yet significant play of these little words. In "The Raven" one can see Poe's mighty effort to make the first syllable of each line a meaningful unit of expression. A glance at most English poetry in iambic meter reveals on page after page that nearly every line begins with a structure word.

These structure words and the few inflected endings are the source of the iambic pattern in English. Poor verse overplays these necessary forms into monotony, as in Wordsworth's "We Are Seven":

> And when the ground was white with snow,
> And I could run and slide,
> My brother John was forced to go,
> And he lies by her side.

A great poet covers these language ribs just as an architect builds beauty upon the columns, girders, and trusses that support his building.

It was because Poe understood the mathematical principle of functionality that he was able to secure his notable effects in syntax. He knew that all words are variables and that word groups that interchange with single words are also variables. These variables fill the spots that are called noun, verb, adjective, and adverb functions in a sentence.

Hence he ridiculed the critics who defended poor poetic lines on the ground that the statement is truthful. He knew that no word is indispensably needed in any sentence; a variable can always substitute for it. "The defenders of this pitiable stuff," he wrote in "Marginalia," "uphold it on the ground of its truthfulnes. Taking the thesis into question, this truthfulness is the one overwhelming defect. An original idea that—to laud the accuracy with which the stone is hurled that knocks us in the head. A little less acuracy might have left us more brains.

Someone has lifted his eyebrows at the fact that Poe used only 1,400 different words in his poetry. There is a fallacy here. Poetry is not to be graded on the extent to which a dictionary is emptied into a composition. Great poetry gains its best effects by other means than vocabulary.

The tension in poetry is created by syntax, melody, and figures of speech. These form the strong enduring fabric upon which the words imprint the color of thought. If you are given the following list of words, as if it might be the dictionary entries available to you, what art would be in the list, what tension, what meaning?

a	my
and	not
bolder	note
could	sing
dwell	sky
dwelt	so
from	swell
hath	than
he	the
I	this
if	well
Israfel	where
lyre	while
melody	wildly
might	within
mortal	

Seventeen of these words are from the class of structure words which Dryden despised; four of them appear twice. Thus in a total vocabulary of 35 words we will see that 21 or 3-5th or 60% are only language machinery. The remaining 14 carry the "meaning."

> If I could dwell
> Where Israfel
> Hath dwelt, and he where I,
> He might not sing so wildly well
> A mortal melody,

While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

I submit that vocabulary plays a less significant role than syntax and melody. The tensions created by the big words in no sense can be said to come even close to those created by the sentence pattern and the music.

Poe insisted that poetry must gain one of its most distinctive effects from its heightening of the melody of ordinary speech. He knew that no one — not even Longfellow — could import and naturalize foreign rhythms. Rather, the rhythmical creation of beauty in any language is possible only when the acoustical and mathematical principles of language are rigidly exemplified. For this reason he pointed out again and again the halting, rough, and tuneless lines of his contemporaries. And because he could exemplify his scholarly knowledge about language, he wrote some of the most hauntingly beautiful poems in the English language.

In 1844, when "The Raven" was gestating in his mind, Poe wrote: "The great force derivable from repetition of particular vowel sounds in verse is little understood, or quite overlooked, even by those versifiers who dwell most upon what is commonly called 'alliteration.'" He knew that language has as relatively few distinctive vowels and diphthongs as music has notes on its scale. He knew that by using these sounds in permutations rather than in mere combinations he could achieve new verbal melodies within the seemingly metronomic monotony of English iambic patterning. He knew, too, that a parallel to the pedal-point in music could be achieved by repetition. Thus with the final sound in **nevermore** in "The Raven" he gave a new force to the anciently used repetend. Earlier writers used repetend almost entirely for enforcing the idea and only the idea; Poe made **nevermore** heighten the idea, the emotion, and the music.

Poe's great contribution to poetic theory lies in his demonstration of the principles of verbal melody. Like his imaginary Israfel and like Richard Wagner, Poe carried the musical ideal of melody to its extreme limits. Just as Debussy revolted against melody, poets like Whitman revolted and found new patterns of poetic utterance. Important as are the new systems of verse structuring, Poe's melodies and harmonies will never be wholly outmoded as long as English is spoken.

As a scholar Poe knew that traditional poetry was largely a versification of abstract ideas; that is, poetry tended almost wholly, as with Alexander Pope, to be essays on truth, duty, honor, love, and other general ideas. The most famous quotation in English poetry is an essay on the wisdom of committing suicide.

To be or not to be, that is the question.

The most familiar lines of Bryant are an essay on the art of dying:

So live that when thy summons comes to join The innumerable caravan . . .

Wordsworth is almost always an essayist, as in

> One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good
> Than all the sages can.

Only Shelley in "I Arise from Dreams of Thee" and a few other lyrics had departed wholly from essay writing to create picture poems. Sensitive to the altered nature of Shelley's poetry, Poe formulated a wholly new aesthetic principle upon the idea that there are chasmal differences between prose and poetry. To him, prose presents ideas, facts, and truths; poetry presents human feelings and passions. The way to present these human feelings and passions is by a combination of vocal music and verbal pictures.

At this point, then, Poe moved away from the essay style and the so-called realistic style of writing. He entered the area of impressionism. Where the later impressionistic painters used blobs of color pigments, Poe used—as did Debussy later in music—selected vocal tones in combination with pictorial devices. He rejected the epic simile in favor of the simple simile and

(Please turn to p. 6)

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The Mathematics of Poe's Poetry

(Continued from p. 5)

the unexpanded metaphor. More fully than any predecessor he depended upon a sequence of richly connotative images.

Again it was his amazing insight into the evocative power of melodically ordered language that gives these images their tension, their beauty, and their illimitable fullness of meaning. The magic of Poe so transcends the power of workaday versifiers that most readers yield to his spell and deny the possibility of explaining his art.

These are the people who deny the correctness of his explanation in "The Philosophy of Composition" of the writing of "The Raven." In this essay Poe told the truth about his application of acoustical and mathematical principles to the art of poetry.

It is because Poe was a deep scholar in language as well as a great artist that we honor him, despite the strange waywardness of his life's course, as one of America's most distinguished men. The final test of his poetic theories is the compulsive power of his poems to bring us under his spell. He has never failed that test.

Harry R. Warfel
University of Florida

Chairman Nonplused Anon

Appalled was he that Shakespeare slandered be
Rank heresy within the rank
Of those to whom he is the bacon
And porcinely usurpts the seat
Of authorial deity.
God, down with kings
Even this among the gilded spears
Of affluent authority —
Wily was a poacher too.

Loren K. Davidson
Ohio University

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GOOD OLD ENGLISH

(Continued from p. 1)

track. Here is a positive delinquency. And here too the principle of taking the path of no resistance must be the principal culprit.

And to what strange vagaries our letter u in America is subjected! Which is easier to say (supposing that is the chief criterion): **oo** or **i-oo**? The gentle glide in the latter would seem to suit indolent lips and tongues (note occasional Eastern Virginia **ki-ards**, or even **gi-irls**), but the former is perhaps even better from this point of view, eliminating even glide-labor. I have known people who went so far as to say **del-ooge** and **sched-ool**—which to me are horrid. Those for whom **noos** (news) and **doos** (dews and dues) are pleasant to the ear, and traditional in family and community, are legally, if not countrywide majority vote, entitled to the exercise of their preference, but the conscientious users of the "glide" u cannot feel unalloyed happiness in their company. I must say I have never heard any protests, angry or otherwise, from either side, though I have often wondered how it is that Noo-Yorkers and Ni-oo-Yorkers can live so peaceably together. Perhaps if I should suddenly spring **stoopid Coopid** at a dinner party I should get plenty to hear.

The latter-day movement of stage and radio to establish the **i-oo** even in words like **suit** and **pursue** may have been due in part to a desire for uniformity, but more probably was designed for currying commercial favor from the British public. It is not likely that the suggested pronunciation will prevail among us in such cases. **Si-oot** sounds especially ridiculous coming from small-town radio operators who never before in all their lives pronounced the word in that outlandish way.

Here again we can honor the impregnable positions held by foreign tongues: by the French, with the "glide" (or rather, it is not a glide, but a swift muscular jamming together), and by Spanish, Italian, German, with the altogether invariable **oo**.

To become an inveterate "slurrer" signifies naturally that the offender never had a very strong schooling in language in the first place, and that in consequence he never knew it well enough to love it and to feel strong concern for its integrity. How indeed should he labor to preserve something of whose existence he is not even conscious. As an older man he does realize that he is being used by youth as accepted guide to linguistic formlessness. He has always acted on the theory that language is merely a tool, like a hoe or a mop, for a utilitarian job, and so influences boys and girls into the same error of judgment (supposing that there can be judgment in blindness). The last state of such a man is worse than the first, and we find him, superior to the dictionary (that big encumbrance!), reveling (if he gets that far in word-stock) in his indisputable, intricacy, indefatigable. **Execrable. inimitable, inexorable,** and their **congeners** have so far stopped him.

Let us now vary the subject slightly, and take a look at "actually." This word is usually slurred to shreds, and becomes indistinguishable from "axially." It is not the pronunciation here, however, that disturbs me most, but rather the puzzle of determining just what service the speaker or writer intends with the word. I seem especially to be afflicted by it in the radio interviews with actors and actresses, singers, athletes, and other public celebrities. "Where were you born?" is asked. "Well, actually, etc." comes the reply. "What are you working at now?" "Well, actually, etc." "How do you think you will like your new assignment?" "Well, actually," again and again and again. In almost all such cases I am unable to detect that the word does more than almost any profane interjection would do at the same spot. Legitimate and worthwhile usage would appear in "He is actually taller than his father," or "The missile actually went farther than was anticipated." But applied as above the word seems to have no practical or basic value at all. It is simply another illustration of the truth of De Tocqueville's prediction about the future of the language in democratic America: that the general paucity of vocabulary would lead to unwarranted adaptations to new ideas and situations, with the consequent ex-

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tinction of genuine identify in far too many of our words. And here again some foreign languages have the advantage over our English. In France, for example, actuellement has only one possible meaning, namely, "at the present time or moment," and no vaporous or vaporizing person in that country can lightly asume personal control of it for his own private mysterious or fraudulent purposes.

Those who are careless, or lack feeling, in regard to individual words of the language naturally also carry the same qualities into their construction of sentences. The excuse of haste is a poor one, and usually carries doubts as to its genuineness. To match the foregoing word-exhibits here are some off-color sentence-examples, gathered recently, not from irresponsible struggling periodicals, but from the better element among them:

"He told them how to stop babies crying." "Wordsworth was stated to have had an illegitimate daughter." "The public finds the plea that national security would be endangered by the award of a relatively small contract to a British firm laughable." "Experts show homeowners the types of fences to put around their particular types of grounds." (Grounds don't come in types). "The full story when it is able to be written will show . . ." "If you compare his output with Browning, or Tennyson, you will find . . ." "All French voters did not vote today." "Sometimes when an attempt is made to work on an old violin the wood crumbles, due to decay." "It boasts the highest sales of all newspapers in Eastern France." "A week later we were in Buffalo, and a hunter had his license suspended for shooting a deer out of season." "The other day I uncovered a daffodil bulb by mistake and a green spear was already pushing up toward the light." "He was horribly tortured by his captors in trying to make him reveal information." "Based on the evidence, Malone was living high."

There is no need here, I think, for a schoolmaster's explanations of the wrongs committed in and by these sentences. Indeed, in such a connection, we might well ponder the words of Louis Armstrong, who, when asked by a lady for a definition of jazz, replied: "If you don't know what jazz is, ma'am, there is no use trying to tell you.

A. M. Withers
Virginia Polytechnic Institute

A special book-form issue of Duquesne University's magazine**Overture** called **Pittsburgh Festival**, covering all phases of Pittsburgh art and life, has just been published. It will contain essays, art, poetry, and fiction and will sell for $2.00. Order from Circulation Department, Overture, Duquesne Univ., Pittsburgh 19, Pa.

GREATER NEW YORK REGIONAL

Spring Meeting April 25, 1959

Miss Marchette Chute, author of **Geoffrey Chaucer of England, Shakespeare of London, Stories from Shakespeare,** and **Ben Jonson of Westminister,** addressed the spring meeting of the Greater New York Regional, College English Association, on April 25 at the Donnell Library Auditorium, New York City. She discussed the hard facts and the utterly delightful nuances of "How a Book Grows." In writing adult biography, Miss Chute suggested that the writer should choose some one subject whom he admires and should choose one in which he must find out a great deal of information. If the writer does not know much about the subject, he may know about the period in which the subject lives. In doing so, the writer should light up the background so strongly that the subject standing in front of it is silhouetted.

To do research, the writer must first read secondary sources relating to the subject. The writer must enjoy reading widely, quickly, and comprehensively and must like writing research. Miss Chute stated that the one fundamental rule which the writer must follow is: don't decide ahead of time what the research material will evolve. She said that if the research is honestly done, the pattern emerges and all the details of the subject's life fall into place.

Under the title of **Two Gentle Men: The Lives of George Herbert and Robert Herrick,** Miss Chute is working on a parallel study of Herbert and Herrick, who were born within a year of each other, both went to Cambridge, were country clergymen, and produced one book of poetry.

Miss Chute conducted a question-answer period with the thirty-five delegates, who represented twenty-two colleges and secondary schools.

Herman A. Estrin
President, GNY CEA
Newark College of Engineering

TEXAS CEA

The Texas Division of the College English Association held its annual breakfast on Saturday, April 4, 1959, in the Silver Room of the Statler-Hilton Hotel in Dallas in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Conference of College Teachers of English of Texas.

The program was as follows:

1. "An Industrial Publications Department in Action" by James Jones, Technical Data Section, Texas Instruments, Inc.

2. "Careers for the English Major: Technical Writing and Editing" by John Walter, University of Texas.

Officers elected were Chairman: Ina Beth McGavock, Trinity University; Secretary: C. Dwight Dorough, University of Houston; Treasurer: A. V. Goyne, Arlington State College.

Plans were made for next year's meeting in Houston, when the CEA breakfast will be held in conjunction with the CCTE. We are hoping to have a speaker who will have a message of interest to CEA membership nationally.

C. Dwight Dorough
University of Houston

Edward Foster of Georgia Institute of Technology writes that his article in the **Tech Alumnus** on "The Co-operative Individualist" has aroused a lot of interest. The article discusses the value of the liberal arts in training men who "will adjust and co-operate but who will at the same time think clearly and speak up when need be." It was reprinted in the Atlanta **Journal and Constitution.**

Books On a Shelf

All grouped together as if to spite their scheme,
I heard their plaint: "I Caeser, do protest
This lack of light that blights my Gaul and all the rest."
He stopped, for Alexander then prepared to redeem.
"Whole continents once heard my eagles scream,
And felt the thrill of freedom in their breast."
Then from a thin volume tightly pressed
Against great Caesar, came another theme.
"No alarums, no banners clamored forth my deeds,
No worlds did tremble at my quiet words,
My thought was merely to plant the seeds
And hope the soul of man would break all swords."
The plume'd conquerors fell silent now,
And looked at Socrates and seemed to bow.

Charles E. Jarvis
Lowell Technological Institute

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On 'Period' Courses

Let me address myself directly to the question how "period" courses can help revitalize college work in the humanities. My answer is that they cannot. They cannot, that is, unles they themselves are revitalized first. I approve of the assumption behind that word 'revitalize," because as the period course is being and has been taught for too many years, it is completely lacking in life—or, to borrow a phrase from **1066 And All That**, dead of a surfeit (of dates and names). The concept of a "period" course—the very title—is, it seems to me, self-defeating in that it stresses chronology at the expense of content—or the "when" at the expense of the "what," "how," and "why."

The catalog reads: "English Literature, 1660-1800: Restoration and 18th Century," and the conscientious or sometimes merely literalminded instructor feels that it is therefore his obligation to his students to acquaint them with all the literature of 140 years, not forgetting, of course, to include the necessary historical and philosophical backgrounds — and all in 16 weeks. It is possible to move from "Hudibras" to "Songs of Experience" during this time, but at something like the speed of light—and at the expense of what loss in understanding and appreciation! The "period" course by its nature imposes upon the instructor the demand of "coverage": to leave an author or two "uncovered" is considered almost indecent.

Students are, for the most part, anxious — sometimes embarrassingly anxious — to please their professors. We all know the student who says, "I didn't know how to study for this exam—I didn't know what you wanted." If, in our period courses, we give the impression that what we want students to know is who wrote what and when, and who came after that, and what did he write, this is what they will consider important. If we create the impression that we are more interested in the facts about literature than in the literature itself, then we are not only deluding them by painting a false picture of what literary study is, but we are also cheating them by depriving them of the rich and vital experience of firsthand contact with the humanities.

At the risk of over-stating the obvious, I must say that there is no special virtue in stressing time categories in the study of literature. Indeed, such an emphasis—one which the period course is especially susceptible to—may be positively harmful. To a student who has taken a series of traditional period courses, the whole corpus of English literature may seem a stately procession of neatly-packaged and labeled time units, marching, rank on rank, the army of unalterable law—instead of the overlapping, confusing, sometimes refractory development that it is. There is no magical evolution of rationalists into romantics in 1798—or again into Victorians in 1837. A student recently objected to my characterization of Edward Young's "Conjectures on Original Composition" as a critical document expressing the romantic position. "It can't be!" he said plaintively. "It was written in 1759, and that was still the Age of Reason."

I should like to suggest that period courses abandon the principle of coverage for the principle of depth. If our aim is to provide students with a sense of what a particular past epoch was like, it seems to me that we can accomplish this by means other than the card-index or vital statistics approach. I suggest a period course in which the "climate" of that period is studied and revealed through repeated close and intensive readings of a few carefully selected works, perhaps no more than four or five.

This approach to Dryden's "Essay of Dramatic Poesy," for example, as a major work of the Restoration, eventually involves the student not only in every literary issue of the day—both theoretical and practical—but in historical, political, and philosophical questions as well. Who can read Guliver's Travels without being aware of its many-sidedeness? Let the 18th-century period course develop as many sides as possible: the nature and kinds of satire; the uses of allegory; the emergency of a modern, supple prose style; the specific religious, social, political, and intellectual conflicts of the time; the idea of mankind; etc., etc.

Furthermore, the approach to a period through intensive exploration of a few major pieces need not exclude consideration of other works and other authors. It is very useful to read other works—less intensively, of course—for purposes of comparison, contrast, exemplication, or for any other logical reason; in this way a broader representation is achieved, not mechanically, by accident of birth or publication, but meaningfully and with relevance, as further ilumination of the age.

Great works of the imagination are multi-leveled; that is the source of their richness and inexhaustibility. We need not be afraid of being too narrow in restricting our study of a period to a few major works; we should rather fear being too shallow. By proving as deeply as we can through the many levels of implication, reference, and association found in a major work, we will not be confining ourselves to that work; for we will discover that the single work has expanded and radiated outward until it touches many other areas of human activity and interest — until it is truly representative of its period. And, if it is a very major work, perhaps it will tell us something about other periods, our period, as well.

The study of the literature of past epochs cannot revitalize the humanities curriculum if the practice of such study is to pump the student enough factual information to enable him to pass a fat multiple-choice final examination. What, if anything, is retained has not broadened the student's intellectual horizons very perceptibly. But if the student has had the time and the opportunity to read and re-read, and has reflected, evaluated, thought, and felt—if, in short, the literary experience has been one of discovery, understanding, and true appreciation—then the goal of the humanities curiculum has been achieved.

Charles Kaplan
Los Angeles State College

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